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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 000129

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - ERIC
BARBORIAK
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS, PRESIDENT
CHEN SHUI-BIAN'S NEW YEAR'S DAY SPEECH

11. Summary: Major Chinese-language Taiwan dailies focused their coverage January 13 on the Legislative Yuan session Thursday, in which the central government's general budget for fiscal 2006 was reviewed. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, carried an exclusive news story on its page two that said: "National Security Council Secretary-General Chiou I-jen Will Stay on [His Current

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Position] to Carry out [the Policies Stated] in Bian's [New Year's Day] Address." The pro-unification "United Daily News," on the other hand, carried a news story on its page thirteen, quoting TECRO Chief David Lee as saying "Bian's New Year's Day Speech 'Willingly Follows' the United States' [Opinion]." The sub-headline added: "Lee Refuses to Further Reveal the Contents of Intense U.S.-Taiwan Communication [over Chen's Speech], Emphasizing that 'I [i.e. Lee] Will Take the Responsibility' If Taiwan Leader Is Again Criticized During the Bush-Hu Meeting This Spring."

12. In terms of editorials, a "Liberty Times" editorial discussed a recent report by the U.S. Congressional Research Service on China's navy modernization, strongly urging the government to go ahead with the policies it stated in Chen's New Year's Day address and purchase advanced weapons to strengthen Taiwan's defense capabilities. A "United Daily News" editorial, on the other hand, analyzed in details the United States' interpretations of Chen's New Year Day's speech by concluding firmly that Chen's speech has sabotaged the mutual trust foundation between Washington and Taipei. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" also criticized Chen's two-faced tactics as revealed in his New Year's Day speech, saying it has "provoked a strong backlash in Washington." End summary.

11. Cross-Strait Relations

"How Can Taiwan Expects Its Allies' Aid if It Does Not Have to the Determination to Defend Itself"

The pro-independence "Liberty Time" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (1/13):

"The [recently-released] U.S. Congressional Research Service report gave a profound analysis of the progress of China's navy modernization and its impact on the United States and cross-Strait situation. [The report] uncovered China's ambitions to proactively develop submarine capabilities, which is something that the world should not overlook. China's rising is by no means the 'peaceful rising' as claimed by itself but an expansion of its hegemony, and it will definitely generate a grave impact on regional peace and stability. .

"In other words, this [U.S. congressional] report not only sent a warning signal to American people, but the Taiwan people should also learn from it [a lesson] that the climate the island is facing now is getting more and more thorny. If the opposition parties continue to block the [U.S.] arms procurement bill, hindering Taiwan from timely strengthening its defense capabilities, it will be too late for Taiwan to cope with the crisis when it breaks out suddenly, and it will surely be a disaster for Taiwan. .

"Taiwan's leaders should thus adopt the 'proactive management' approach toward cross-Strait economics and trade, make plans to purchased advanced weapons to strengthen the island's defense capabilities, and push for [Taiwan's] constitutional revisions to legitimize Taiwan's sovereignty. [This newspaper] believes a majority of Taiwan people will stand firmly with the government to confront this evil enemy [i.e. China]."

12. President Chen Shui-bian's New Year's Day Speech

A) "Which Is Genuine, the [New Year's Day] Speech on the Table, or the Pledge under the Table?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] commented in an editorial (1/13):

"The U.S. State Department responded immediately after President Chen Shui-bian delivered his New Year's Day speech by repeating [Chen's] 'Four No's' [pledge] verbatim and saying that it hopes Chen will stick to his pledge. ...

"Both the State Department's statement and [TECRO Chief] David Lee's remarks [on Chen's speech] were composed and restrained. People who are not familiar with diplomatic rhetoric may not necessarily understand the undertone. A State Department official thus accepted an interview with this newspaper's Washington correspondent in the form of 'anonymity' and stated completely the United States' position and views. The fact that Washington chose to state [its position] clearly this time was an evident move to prevent anyone from dodging its question or twisting its original meaning.

"But the choice of words of this [unnamed] State Department official remained discreet, as any diplomat should do. But if we try to put his remarks in layman's words, his statements can be interpreted by tracking the following points:

"First, 'The U.S. interests lie in meeting the predictability and stability required by the 23 million Taiwan people require.' The interpretation is: Chen has been flip-flopping in terms of his cross-Straits policy; he especially loves to curry favor with the deep-green voters before the election and then swung back to the middle [route] after the elections. Also, his policies tend to change in accordance with different people, matters and timing. Chen's New Year's Day address this year was no exception. Washington is constantly confused by such drastic alternations, so it said very frankly that the Taipei authorities must be constant, stable and predictable with regard to its policies.

"Second, 'The Taiwan authorities have repeatedly guaranteed to us [i.e. Washington] that the New Year's Day speech does not change any of its existing policies. As a result, it will be a matter of rhetoric as long as [Taiwan's] policy remains unchanged.' The interpretation is: Washington understands that Chen had to put Taiwan's domestic situation into consideration when he delivered his New Year's Day speech, so it attributed it as a 'rhetoric' question. Even though Washington can understand [Chen's needs], it pays more attention to [Chen's] pledge of 'unchanged policy' under the table. .

"Third, 'From the United States' perspective, any sabotage, hindrance, or refusal to (cross-Straits) contact is not in the United States' interests.' The interpretation is: Washington cannot accept it if 'proactive management, effective opening' is a move to back away from the developments of cross-Straits relations. The United States also believes that [Taiwan] should not stop communicating [with Beijing] using excuses such as existing obstruction or setbacks. Washington believes that the only way to cope with cross-Straits impasse is to 'continue working out resolutions.'

"Four, 'We [i.e. Washington] are interesting in [both sides of the Taiwan Straits] moving towards stability and prosperity. This is a strategic goal. We also hope our friends in Taipei to tell us which tactics they will use to achieve this goal.' The interpretation is: it will not be viable for Taipei to pledge under the table that its 'policy remains unchanged;' [Taipei] needs to put words into real action. .

"The picture of Washington-Taipei-Beijing relations drawn by the United States seems to deviate greatly from the spirit inherent in Chen's New Year's Day speech; it also differed greatly from National Security Council Secretary-General Chiou I-jen's interpretation [of the U.S. attitude] afterwards. Perhaps this is the key to David Lee's remarks that '[we cannot say that] both sides have reached a consensus over [Chen's] speech.' Even though Washington now recognizes that the Taipei authorities have made pledge about its 'unchanged policy' and that what [Chen's] New Year's Day speech was merely a kind of 'rhetoric,' the United States evidently wants to 'wait and see' the words and action of the Taipei authorities. Such a development has sabotaged the foundation of mutual trust that Taiwan's interaction with the United States is based on, and this is another grave loss created by [Chen's] New Year's Day speech. ."

B) "Washington Watching What Chen Will Do Next"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (1/13):

"Anyone who has paid attention to the course of recent political events may be attracted by the two-faced tactics

President Chen Shui-bian and his senior aides are playing in managing the aftermath of his controversial New Year address that has provoked a strong backlash in Washington. .

"By retreating to the political left, Chen has a near-term aim to achieve. He hopes that his goodwill can win more votes for his former Presidential Secretary General Yu Shyi-kun, who is running in the ruling party's leadership election schedule for the coming Sunday. If Yu, a loyal ally to Chen, wins the chairmanship, it would help him to prolong his influence with the party machine at a time when his presidential authority is fading away with the approach of his departure from office.

Perhaps he will be able to win the Sunday poll. But the sailing ahead might not be smooth for him. U.S. suspicion of him has not eased because of his repeated policy assurances. The Bush administration is still watching closely to see what Chen will do next. Beijing, for its part, has just warned that the tension in the Taiwan Strait is resurging, referring to the remarks he made on New Year's Day."

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